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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CHINA'S ANTI-SECESSION LAW

1 Summary: Major Chinese-language newspapers in Taiwan continued March 18 to report on China's Anti-Secession Law by focusing on the U.S. House of Representatives' successful passage of a resolution Thursday demanding that the Bush administration express grave concern about the Anti-Secession Law, and on Taiwan's reaction to the House of Representatives' move. Taiwan's largest daily, the pro-independence "Liberty Times," ran a page-two article that said, in the sub-headline: "The House passed the resolution by an overwhelming margin of 424 to 4 votes. The Senate will follow suit. [The resolution] will provide a substantive foundation for [U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza] Rice when she visits and negotiates with China." Both the pro-independence "Liberty Times" and "Taiwan Daily" reported on page two that Taiwan's Foreign Minister Mark Chen said his ministry is initiating proposals to bring the issue of the Anti-Secession Law to the United Nations with help from Taiwan allies. The "Liberty Times" also had an article on page two headlined: "Taiwan will find an opportunity to ask the United States to review the Taiwan Relations Act." The centrist "China Times," in a story on page thirteen, quoted Taiwan's Cabinet Spokesman Cho Jung-tai as saying that Rice's visit will bring pressure from the international community to bear on China since the U.S. government and its congress have taken a firm and determined position toward China's Anti-Secession Law.

2 A "China Times" editorial urged the Chen Shui-bian administration to use a democratic approach to respond to Beijing's 'non-peaceful' Anti-Secession Law. An op-ed piece in the limited-circulation, pro-independence English-language "Taipei Times" noted that Chinese President Hu Jintao's new four-point guideline of March 4, when taken together with the Anti-Secession Law and the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, reveals a clear picture for Taiwan -- i.e. Washington and Beijing will work together to prevent Taiwan from claiming independence, and Washington and Tokyo will join hands stop China from taking Taiwan by force. The limited-circulation, pro-unification English-language "China Post" editorial, however, presented Taiwan's role in the region as part of an emerging strategic competition between the United States and its allies and China to control the future of the Asian region. End summary.

A)" Using a Democratic Approach to Respond to 'Non-Peaceful' [Means] Is a Right Thing to Do!"

The centrist, pro-status quo "China Times"
[circulation: 600,000] editorialized (3/18):

". The Beijing authorities may find it difficult to understand why many Taiwan people mind that the word 'non-peaceful' appears in the articles [of the Anti-Secession Law] since [in Beijing's view,] it has included many goodwill gestures in the law. The reason is very simple. The people of Taiwan, given many years of cultivating democracy, believe that any dispute can be worked out using a peaceful, rational and democratic approach. Beijing maybe cared a great deal about the calls for a new constitution and name changes for Taiwan during last year-end's Legislative Yuan elections. But didn't Taiwan voters already [make a choice and] offer an answer with their votes? Without the results of last year-end's elections, we would not see the direct cross-Strait charter flights for the Lunar New Year in January, nor would there be a ten-point joint statement announced by [President] Chen and [PPF Chairman James] Soong in February. Beijing's Anti-Secession Law, on the other hand, gives many Taiwan people the impression that no matter how hard they have tried to demonstrate the wisdom of 'maintaining the status quo' in the Taiwan Strait, they are still haunted by the shadow of 'non-peaceful' treatment [by Beijing.]

"By the same token, the Taiwan authorities should not misinterpret the antipathy of the majority of Taiwan people toward the Anti-Secession Law and think that public opinion in Taiwan has turned to the other side

again. [The truth is that] the same high percentage of Taiwan people also disagree with having Chen personally join and stand at the front line of the mass rally [in protest of the Anti-Secession Law] -- one of the major examples that demonstrates the wisdom of the public. In other words, members of the public naturally support Taiwan articulating its dissatisfaction toward the Beijing authorities, but this does not mean that they support having cross-Straits relations totally moving backwards. This is another reason showing the value of democracy. ."

B) "Does China Need a Law to Wage War on Taiwan?"

Freelance writer Ku Er-teh noted in an op-ed piece in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (3/18):

". What we need to take note of is that on March 4, Hu spoke of his four-point guideline on Taiwan in response to President Chen Shui-bian's 'four noes and one not.' This is very different from Jiang's 'listen to what [Chen] says and observe what he does' policy.

"If Hu's new four-point guideline is taken together with the Anti-Secession Law and US-Japan Security Treaty, what looms ahead of Taiwan is very clear: The US and China prevent Taiwan from claiming independence, the US and Japan work together to stop China taking Taiwan by force, and the US pushes both sides to negotiate.

"Hu's remarks revealed that Chen's 'four noes and one not' is the bottom line acceptable to both sides, and that he expects Chen to conform to the 'one China' principle. ."

C) "Taiwan's Role in Struggle for Strategic Dominance in Asia"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] observed in an editorial (3/18):

"Taiwan is caught up in a bigger game than a simple assertion of the self-governing island's right to decide its own future. Taiwan is part of an emerging strategic competition between the U.S. and its allies and mainland China to control the future of the Asian region. .

"The U.S. is growing impatient with Taiwan. The opposition controlled Legislature is dragging its feet on passing a budget for a multi-billion dollar arms package from the U.S., which is mainly focused anti-submarine warfare. . The U.S. has signaled that Taiwan, which it has regarded as a strategic asset, without a substantial rearming may now become a strategic liability.

"In all, the U.S. will expect its allies to aid in containing Beijing's military ambitions. China sees Taiwan as a part of it [sic] territory and its unification would break down the U.S. lines of communication and would further isolate Japan. .

"So far, the emerging strategic competition can't properly be called a new Cold War in the sense of the old United States-Soviet Union conflict, but the military realignment is sure to promote China's paranoia of 'encirclement.' Taking over Taiwan, and putting it out of the equation, is a long term strategic objective that Beijing will achieve by force if necessary."

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